

To: Poulet, Chris[Poulet.Chris@epa.gov]
From: Chris Poulet
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Update Gold King Mine Blowout

- Mine drainage Plume was passing through durango on the Animas at around 6pm on 8/6. It was expected to move along the animas river in durango fairly quickly.

-Due to lack of data about metals concentration in the plume, the city of durango closed the river to recreation until further notice well in advance of the plume. Although durango gets most of its water from reservoirs, there are a few intakes to augment the water delivery system, and those were also shut down.

EPA field OSC indicates the need for interpretation of data by EPA to answer community concerns as soon as possible.

- EPA 8 Regional Administrator McGrath and ER Branch chief Ostrander flying 8/7 at 8am to meet with county commissioners and mayor. EPA 8 will offer to hold a public meeting tomorrow if time allows before the RAs 4pm return flight.

-Data availability.

-EPA has some pH data taken with a pH meter at Bakers Bridge 10 miles upstream from Durango. As the plume of sediment passed this point...pH dropped from 7 to approx 5.5 or 5.6

-EPA has baseline data for metals concentration from before the blowout available for various sampling points along the Animas River.

-EPA has collected 19 water samples from the animas river on 6/5 and 15 samples on 6/6 and is expected to have analysis results by 12pm on 6/7. Epa has indicated that it will compare these results with baseline information if appropriate.

Please note that it is possible that EPA could ask ATSDR to evaluate the data when it becomes available.

EPA received a call from San Juan Basin Health Department at 4pm which was referred to ATSDR. ATSDR rep was able to contact SJBHD executive director Leann Jollon at about 545pm with ATSDR regional medical officer.

Question posed by the SJBHD was ...in the absence of any data about metals concentrations in the plume, how should they respond to any person who indicating exposure to the water in the plume. They indicated a need to be "coached" in these responses.

ATSDR Regional medical officer indicated that per EPA the only current data available was the pH data provided from Bakers Bridge and so ATSDR could only address that information for the moment. The pH data available indicated a pH comparable to that of rainwater....

-Any concerns about exposure to plume water would be treated symptomatically by a physician...with the expectation that if some type of eye irritation occurred, a physician would recommend irrigation. Also, individuals concerned about exposure to plume water could shower as they normal would after recreating in the river under normal circumstances.

-The SJBHD indicated a concern about zinc in the water causing potential digestive system problems. ATSDR RMO and regional rep noted that zinc was present in vitamin supplements but that since data on metals concentrations would become available 8/7 per discussion with EPA, any discussion about metals concentrations in the plume would have to wait until epa provided the sampling results.

-SJBHD noted that it might require coaching to help explain any interpretation of the data to the public and to help with the decision to reopen the river.

-Please note : it is possible that EPA or the SJB Health department could ask ATSDR for a public health interpretation of the data on 8/7....although as of 8/6, the EPA technical services branch chief indicates a readiness to do so for the RA visit to Durango on 8/7.